

XI.—*Letters, Extracts, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters, addressed “to the Editors of ‘The Ibis’”:

SIRS,—In a list of Swatow and Foochow birds published in ‘The Ibis’ for 1892, I stated that *Sterna hirundo* breeds on the Swatow coast in company with *S. melanauchen*. I have now reason to believe that the birds in question were not *S. hirundo*, but *S. dougalli*. Mr. Rickett and I have lately received a specimen of this species said to have been shot about the Shanghai coast, and, so far as I can remember, it agrees with the specimens shot by me and my collector at Swatow, and which I wrongly referred to *S. hirundo*.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

J. D. DE LA TOUCHE.

Foochow,
July 30th, 1896.

SIRS,—In the last number of ‘The Ibis’ Mr. Sclater has a note on the “Nomenclature of the *Palamedeidae*.” He says that I “have lately shown (Cat. B. xxvii. p. 4) that *Palamedea* [more correctly *Parra*] *chavaria* of Linnæus was probably based on a Colombian specimen.” I must remark that I have not left the point as *probable*; Linné’s description and locality (Carthagera), both derived from Jacquin, being quite clear, I cannot entertain the least doubt about their applying to the Colombian Crested Screamer, and not to the Argentine representative species. Such being the case, I could not hesitate in restoring Linné’s name to the Colombian bird, to which only it belongs. If authors, beginning with Illiger (1811), have confused the two species, or have wrongly used Linné’s name for the Argentine bird, it is their fault, and, according to me, we have no right whatever to discard Linné’s name on the pretence of uncertainty. Now that ornithologists are aware that the name *Chauna chavaria* (Linn.) belongs to the Colombian and not to the Argentine bird, every possible *uncertainty* will be dispelled,

and I hope that Mr. Selater will not persist in his determination to reject the Linnean term "*chavaria*." I think that Linné's names ought to be supported with all our power, especially if they are as *certain* as the one to which I now refer.

Yours &c.,

T. SALVADORI.

Turin, Zoological Museum,
November 13th, 1896.

SIRS,—Mr. Lodge's interesting notes on the habits of some West-Indian Humming-birds, published in your last number (*Ibis*, 1896, pp. 495-519), call for a few remarks on the names of some of the species he mentions and their distribution. He seems to have examined the series of skins in the British Museum, but not to have consulted the Catalogue referring to them (*Cat. Birds Brit. Mus.* vol. xvi.). Had he done so a few slight errors might have been avoided.

The close relationship of the various forms of *Bellona* has long puzzled writers on these birds, in consequence, no doubt, of the very vague and often inaccurate localities ascribed to the specimens examined. The true state of the case is set forth in the Catalogue referred to, and it seems pretty well established that the commonest and most widely diffused form—*B. exilis*—is found in every island from the Virgin Islands, and perhaps Puerto Rico, to Santa Lucia, little variation existing between birds from any of these islands. In Barbados, the Grenadines, and Grenada, *B. cristata* alone occurs, and in St. Vincent an intermediate form, which Gould described as *B. ornata*. It is true that Gould did not know the origin of his types, but the domicile of this particular form has been clearly established by Ober and Herbert Smith. As Mr. Lodge did not visit St. Vincent he did not himself meet with the true *B. ornata*.

When in Barbados, he says (p. 505), he saw birds which he supposed to be either *B. cristata* or *B. exilis*. They must assuredly have been the former, which is the only form known to occur in that island.

In writing of *Thalurania wagleri* (p. 508) he incidentally mentions that birds in one of the Gould cases in the British Museum seemed to him to be wrongly named *Eucephala grayi*. But *E. grayi*, as Gould very well knew, is quite a different bird and well known as an inhabitant of Ecuador, and cannot be confused with *T. wagleri* by any one at all conversant with the Trochilidæ. The correct name of *T. wagleri* is *T. bicolor* (Gm.), as long ago determined by Elliot and others.

I quite agree with Mr. Lodge's remarks on the unsatisfactory nature of the plates representing Humming-birds and on the way stuffed specimens are mounted. But no representation, either as drawings or mounted skins, can give any idea of the appearance of these birds in flight, in which attitude they are most commonly seen. The best representations of resting Humming-birds that I know of, are those of Mr. Baron, now to be seen in the British Museum. Mr. Baron mounted all these birds himself from freshly-shot specimens, and the positions in which he has placed them are most life-like.

Yours &c.,

OSBERT SALVIN.

10 Chandos Street, Cavendish Square,
December 2nd, 1896.

Mr. D. G. Elliot's Expedition to Somaliland.—Our friend Mr. D. G. Elliot returned from his excursion to Somaliland (see *Ibis*, 1896, p. 427) in October last, and left London for Chicago on Nov. 14th. He achieved his main object in getting a good series of specimens of the Antelopes of Somaliland for the Field Columbian Museum (amongst them examples of the rare "Beira," *Dorcotragus megalotis*). Mr. E. Dodson, who accompanied him as collector, obtained about 300 bird-skins, the preliminary examination of which indicates that there are probably some novelties amongst them, though none of very prominent originality. Mr. Elliot, we regret to say, contracted fever on the Haud, and performed the journey of 200 miles back to the coast on a

litter, but has made a good recovery, and has left England in fair health. The following outline of his route, given to Reuter's Agency, is published in the 'Times' of Nov. 16th:—

“ We left Berbera at the end of April with a caravan consisting of 68 men, all armed with Sniders and Winchester's, and 56 camels, which were afterwards increased to 98, our object being to explore certain districts of Somaliland between Berbera and the river Chibele. During our stay in Africa we made three expeditions from the coast. The first, to the east of Berbera towards the Gobari plains and the range of the Golis, occupied three weeks. The second, to the south of Berbera, *viâ* Mandera and the Jerato pass of the Golis range to the south of the Toyo plain, lasted six weeks. The third expedition occupied over two months. On this journey we went from Hargeisa (about 100 miles from Berbera) and crossed the Haud Desert by a route discovered by me over the Maredleh Plain to a point 20 miles from Milmil. Altogether we were in the interior six months, and returned to Aden in October.”

Mr. Whyte's new Expedition to the Mountains of North Nyasaland.—Mr. Alexander Whyte, F.Z.S., writing from Karonga, at the north end of Lake Nyasa, on July 16th, says * :—“ I have just returned from my sojourn of eighteen days on the highest range of the Deep Bay-Karonga mountains, and am much pleased with the collections made there. We all suffered from the cold, and had some bad cases of sickness; but, on the whole, the boys worked well, and I have got together a larger collection than I have ever made on any previous expedition.

“ The flora of this range proved most interesting, resembling that of Mlanje, yet differing from it in many respects. I failed to find any trace of a conifer; but, on the other hand, the range is richer in heaths than Mlanje is. I fancy the three principal peaks of the range, to the tops of which I went, rise to an altitude of from 7000 to 8000 feet above the sea-level; and I thoroughly explored this end of the range,

* See Brit. Centr. Afr. Gaz., Aug. 15th, 1896.

from end to end, and I could see close at hand the mountain I explored at the Mount Waller end of the range. I cannot quote figures exactly till I go thoroughly through my collections; but of plants I have over 6000 dried specimens; of skins of birds 230; of mammals 200; of reptiles, &c., in spirits, 120; of crustacea, &c., 250; of land-shells 5000; of insects 3000; besides a series of geological specimens." These collections, Mr. Alfred Sharpe, H.B.M. Acting-Commissioner at Zomba, informs us, are now being packed for transmission to England.

Rare British Birds.—At the meeting of the Linnean Society on Nov. 5th, a specimen of the Cream-coloured Courser (*Cursorius gallicus*), which had been shot, on Salisbury Plain, at Earlstoke, on the 10th October last, was exhibited by Mr. Harting, who gave particulars of the occurrence, and stated that another example of this bird had since been obtained in Bouley Bay, Jersey.

In 'Knowledge' for November, 1896 (vol. xix. p. 251), we find the following account by Mr. Harry F. Witherby of the occurrence in Yorkshire of a specimen of Macqueen's Bustard (*Otis macqueeni*):—

"On October 17th I was walking along the sea-bank at Easington, Yorkshire, in company with Mr. Eagle Clarke, the well-known ornithologist, and Mr. Bendelack Hewetson, Jun. We all at once noticed a large bird flying low over the fields like an Owl, and being pursued by small birds. It skimmed across a high bank, and went down in a field beyond. We immediately followed it, and on arriving at the bank crept up to the top and cautiously looked over. There, in the middle of a stubble-field, about one hundred and twenty yards from us, was what we took to be a Great Bustard. We lay down and watched it with our field-glasses. It seemed quite at home, and behaved perfectly naturally. It strutted about with a stately gait, somewhat like a Peacock, and pecked at the ground here and there in an almost disdainful way. Then it began to dust itself, drawing in its head and ruffling its feathers, and spreading wings and tail. We watched it closely for quite ten minutes,

and were fascinated by its interesting ways, probably never observed in England by ornithologists before, for this grand bird was a Macqueen's Bustard, and only the third example which has visited our shores. Meanwhile two men had come on the scene with guns, and after a little manœuvring George Edwin Chubbley shot the bird as his brother, Craggs Chubbley, put it over to him. Whilst being followed it never seemed flurried. When flying, the wings of the bird were a striking black and white. The long black tufts on the sides of the neck appeared as black streaks at a distance, and were very conspicuous as the bird stood in the field.

“Macqueen's Bustard is a desert-loving species, inhabiting the steppes of Asia, and why it visits us at all is merely a matter of conjecture, but probably certain young birds wander far from their course and thus manage to reach our coast. When the feathers of the bird were turned up we found them to be of a delicate blush pink at the base, contrasting beautifully with the speckled sandy colour of the bird's back. The beak is brownish black, the legs and feet light straw-colour, and the eyes very pale straw and very bright. The length from beak to tail is $28\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the tarsus $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the flexure 16 inches. The bird was a young male, and its stomach contained vegetable matter and three beetles.”

At the Meeting of the Zoological Society of London on December 1st, 1896, Mr. H. E. Dresser exhibited and made remarks on a specimen of Pallas's Willow-Warbler (*Phylloscopus proregulus*), shot at Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, on the 31st October, 1896, being the first instance of the occurrence of this bird in Great Britain.

Parasitism of Cassidix oryzivora.—The last number of ‘Timehri’ (vol. x. new ser. p. 37) contained an article by Mr. C. A. Lloyd on “Queer Homes,” from which we extract the following remarks on the breeding-habits of *Cassidix oryzivora* (cf. Ibis, 1896, p. 585):—

“A cabbage-palm that I once saw was decorated in a most singular manner with the nests of the Black Bunyah (*Ostinops*

decumanus). At the end of every arching frond was attached a long purse-like nest, and the whole were arranged as symmetrically as if placed there by human hands. While speaking of the Bunyah it may be as well to note that another Hangnest, the large Black Rice-bird (*Cassidix oryzivora*), seems never to build a home of her own, but contents herself with making use of the deserted Bunyah nests in which to lay her curiously marked eggs."

Breeding-place of Ross's Gull.—One of Dr. Nansen's achievements during his recent journey in the Polar Regions seems to have been the discovery of the hitherto unknown breeding-place of Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*). 'As we learn from the 'Daily Chronicle' of Nov. 3rd, large numbers of this rare Gull were seen in the neighbourhood of four islands (proposed to be called "Hvitenland"), situated in latitude 81° 38' N. and longitude 63° E., in August 1895. Dr. Nansen writes :—

"This, the most markedly polar of all bird forms, is easily recognizable from other species of Gull by its beautiful rose-coloured breast, its wedge-shaped tail, and its airy flight.

"It is, without comparison, the most beautiful of all the animal forms of the frozen regions. Hitherto it has only been seen by chance on the utmost confines of the unknown Polar Sea, and no one knew whence it came or whither it went; but here we had unexpectedly come upon its native haunt, and although it was too late in the year to find its nests, there could be no doubt about its breeding in this region."

New Index to 'The Ibis.'—The Index to the last three series of 'The Ibis' (1877-94), edited by Mr. Salvin, is making good progress through the press, and will, it is hoped, be ready for issue in April of this year. It will contain an index of the generic and specific names that occur in the fourth, fifth, and sixth series, and an index to the plates.

The Agaléga Islands.—We are not aware that the Agaléga Islands, which lie in the Indian Ocean south of the Seychelles, in about $10^{\circ} 50'$ S. lat. and 57° E. long., have ever been visited by an ornithologist, although they appear to have some claims to our attention. The islands are two in number. The North Island is about five miles, and the South Island about six miles in length, connected with each other by a strip of sand. They are low, but well wooded with coconuts, casuarinas, and other trees.

According to a report on the islands addressed to the Governor of Mauritius in 1893, the Agalégas “abound with game: hares, Quails, Guinea-fowls, Peacocks, and wildfowls, the Egyptian Ibis, Larks, Curlews, and various sea-birds. A great source of supply for the inhabitants is the almost inexhaustible amount of eggs of birds (Sea-Gulls) to be gathered on a certain part of the North Island in September and October every year. Acres of ground are covered with eggs and birds.”

As we are also told that the climate of the Agalégas is exceedingly healthy, the “temperature always cooled by the sea-breeze,” and, moreover, that “crime is unknown” and order always prevails, we cannot do wrong in recommending these islands to the notice of the wandering Members of the B. O. U.

Swallow-Bluff in British Columbia.—In Mr. Warburton Pike’s lately-published ‘Through the Subarctic Forest’ will be found (p. 160) a good illustration of a nesting-place of the North-American Cliff-Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*), situated on a bluff on the banks of the Pelly River. As shown by Messrs. Sharpe and Wyatt in their Monograph (ii. pp. 538, 539), this Swallow is abundant in many parts of Alaska and British Columbia.

The late Mr. Seebohm’s Posthumous Works.—Messrs. Pawson and Brailsford, of Sheffield, announce as nearly ready for publication the late Mr. Seebohm’s ‘Coloured Figures of the Eggs of British Birds,’ edited by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe.

It will be issued in one volume, royal octavo, at the price of £3 3s.

The 'Monograph of the Family of Thrushes' is also announced by Messrs. Sotheran and Co. It will be published in parts, and will contain altogether 141 plates drawn by Keulemans and coloured by hand; each part will contain 12 plates. This work will also be edited by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe.

List of Illustrated Ornithological Works in Course of Publication, and Dates of the last Parts issued.

- BRITISH BIRDS, their Nests and Eggs. By various well-known Authors. Illustrated by F. W. Frohawk. Part XVII. (1896.)
- DRESSER (H. E.). A History of the Birds of Europe. Supplement. Part VIII. (June 1896.)
- GIGLIOLI (E. H.) and MANZELLA (A.). Iconografia dell' Avifauna Italica. Fasc. 53. (1895.)
- LEE (O. A. J.). Among British Birds in their Nesting Haunts. Part I. (1896.)
- LILFORD (Lord). Coloured Figures of the Birds of the British Islands. Part XXXIII. (November 1896.)
- MENZBIER (M. A.). Dr. N. A. Severtzow. Ornithologie du Turkestan. Livr. 4. (1894.)
- MEYER (A. B.). Abbildungen von Vogel-Skeletten. Lief. XIX.-XXI. (1895.)
- NAUMANN'S Naturgeschichte der Vögel Deutschlands. Lief. 3. (1896.)
- NEHRLING (H.). North-American Birds. Part XV. (1896.)
- ROTHSCHILD (Hon. WALTER). The Avifauna of Laysan. Part II. (November 1893.)
- RUSS (K.). Fremdländische Stubenvögel. Band II. Lief. 14. (1896.)
- SHARPE (R. B.). Monograph of the *Paradiseida*, or Birds of Paradise. Part V. (1896.)
- WILSON (SCOTT B.) and EVANS (A. H.). Aves Hawaiienses. The Birds of the Sandwich Islands. Part VI. (July 1896.)